



P.O. Box 62
Brentwood, Tennessee 37027
HDSA-TN@hotmail.com
Facebook: HDSA-TennesseeHDCCommunity

November is the start of the end of year celebrations. It should be filled with food, family and fun. If your loved one is feeling unmotivated this could be a challenging time of year. November's monthly newsletter will outline some options for keeping the busy end of year season as mellow as possible.

The HDSA's publication *Understanding Behavior in Huntington's Disease* defines apathy as synonymous with inattention, indifference, and lethargy. Apathy is prevalent in HD and impacts a majority of persons at some time during the disease. A lack of motivation to get things started (or a lack of initiation) often accompanies apathy, but a lack of initiation can also occur by itself in the absence of apathy. Apathy is not to be confused with a lack of awareness, denial, or an inability to experience pleasure.

For example, apathy can be seen in a person who has a hard time "getting projects started" or in the case of someone who "isn't doing anything anymore." If my loved one is feeling apathetic (i.e. indifferent, not motivated) feelings of frustration could surface when my loved one is not willing to get out of bed, shower, groom, get dressed, help with housework, or leave the house.

Behavioral interventions are often successful in lessening apathy. Once an activity is started (for example showering, dressing, getting out of bed) the individual will often complete the activity. The following behavioral suggestions may be helpful:

- ✚ Try to avoid interpreting apathy as laziness. Apathy can be part of the disease process. Name-calling will only increase tensions.
- ✚ Educate other people about the person with HD's inability to begin or initiate behaviors. Encourage others to include the person with HD in the activity. Education can go a long way especially if someone has not seen the person with HD in some time.
- ✚ Reach out to Margo Bradley, LCSW at 901-609-9127 or at mbradley@hdsa.org to address the frustration of dealing with an apathetic person.
- ✚ Guide and encourage behaviors but be respectful of no.
- ✚ Use calendars, schedules, alarms, and have a regular routine. These tools can provide a reminder about activities and even encourage self-initiation.
- ✚ The use of technology (phone calls and texts) from family members beyond the caregiver can help to encourage participation.
- ✚ Remember that a person with HD may need extra help and time to participate. Break down instructions into simple one step tasks. Give concrete directions. Allow for extra time.

There could be medical interventions for apathy as well. You will want to discuss apathy with your physician as well to determine if medications are appropriate.

It is my hope that some of the suggestions outlined above will help make your November and December run a little bit more smoothly. Please do not hesitate to call me at 901-609-9127 or send me an email at mbradley@hdsa.org if you are in need of someone to talk too. I am here for you, for your loved ones, and for the HD community at large.

Until next month,

Margo Bradley, LCSW

Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow.